Mr. Wm D. Tuttle

MEMORIAL STONES

DEDICATED BY

THE TOWN OF ACTON,

APRIL 19, 1895.

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MEMORIAL STONES.

At a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, in Boston, on Thursday, May 9, 1895, Rev. Edward G. Porter communicated an account of a visit to Acton on occasion of the recent commemoration of the events of April 19, 1775, in substance as follows:

Having accepted an invitation from the town of Acton to participate in its special observance of the nineteenth of April this year, I improved the opportunity to copy the inscriptions carved upon the three memorial stones which were dedicated with appropriate ceremonies.

The weather was exceptionally fine, and from an early hour the citizens from all the outlying districts came pouring into the town in teams, on bicycles, and on foot. It was a genuine old-fashioned celebration, such as we do not see any more in our larger towns. It suggested, in some of its features, the traditional college Commencement. Enterprising traders had pitched their tents around the spacious green, and catered to the varied wants of every passer-by. Besides the eatables and drinkables, there was an imposing display of dry-goods, hardware, and all sorts of "notions." Some of these itinerants, I noticed, had sold out their entire stock before the celebration was over.

The Acton houses were gayly decorated, — even some of the farmhouses in remote parts of the town, — showing the popular interest in the observances of the day. At nine o'clock some of the military and other guests arrived at the nearest station, — about a mile east from the village. The procession comprised the Salem Cadet Band, the Isaac Davis Post and

the Concord Post, G. A. R., the Dunstable Band and one hundred and thirty-five members of the old Sixth Regiment, M. V. M.

The first halt was made at the old Robbins farm, about a quarter of a mile from Nashoba Brook. Here a boulder, eight feet long, and weighing several tons, had been placed by the wayside, in front of the cellar-hole of the old house in which lived Captain Joseph Robbins. On the face of the stone is sunk a deep rough panel, inscribed in large plain letters, as follows: —

SITE OF HOUSE WHERE FIRST
ALARM WAS GIVEN IN ACTON!
MORNING OF 19TH OF APRIL 1775.
"CAPT. ROBBINS! CAPT. ROBBINS!
THE REGULARS ARE COMING!!"

The house had two stories in front, with a pitch-roof behind. It was painted red, and was said to have been the first painted house in the town. It was burned about 1863. The estate has descended from father to son for five generations without a deed of transfer. I talked with a lady born near by in 1811, — one of nine children.

The dedicatory exercises consisted of prayer by Mr. Wood, and addresses by Luther Conant, president of the day, and Moses Taylor.

The company then proceeded to the neighboring cemetery, — a large and attractive spot, well shaded and well cared for, — the old and the new in one enclosure. Here, under the fluttering flags, rest more than a hundred Revolutionary soldiers, — a larger number than can be found in any rural cemetery with which I am familiar. This shows the remarkable stability of the population of Acton. Her sons have generally chosen to remain on the ancestral acres. Here they have lived and here they have died, — a homogeneous, industrious, contented people.

After patriotic exercises among the graves, conveyances were furnished for citizens and guests to go about two miles through the village, to the southwest-central part of the town, to dedicate another monument. This was placed on the greensward

in front of the house now owned by H. A. Gould, a little south of the Harvard turnpike. It is an old dwelling, but in good repair, and was once the home of the Hosmers and Blanchards. The boulder is large and well shaped, like the other, and bears the following inscription: —

FROM THIS FARM WENT
CALVIN AND LUTHER BLANCHARD
TO CONCORD FIGHT AND BUNKER HILL
SONS OF SIMON BLANCHARD WHO WAS
KILLED AT THE BATTLE OF QUEBEC 1759
LUTHER WAS THE FIRST MAN HIT BY A
BRITISH BALL AT THE OLD NORTH BRIDGE
AND DIED IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COUNTRY
A FEW MONTHS LATER

On the rear of the stone, in a small panel, are the words: —

ERECTED 1895 BY
LUKE BLANCHARD
GRANDSON OF CALVIN

Here two ministers of the town, Messrs. Buxton and Lindh, conducted the brief memorial exercises.

An additional inscription ought to be placed here, stating that this was also the home of Abner Hosmer, the Acton patriot who shared with Captain Davis the honor of being the first to fall at Concord Bridge.

About half-way back to the village, on the other road to West Acton, we dedicated the third stone which had been set up to commemorate the day. This was in front of the premises of Captain Davis. The house of his day is gone, but portions of it, we are told, appear in the present buildings. The flat stone doorstep now in use is undoubtedly the original.

Few spots in the town have more interest to the student of history. Here, in the early morning, about six o'clock, were assembled the brave minute company, — mostly young fellows, — eager to place themselves under the command of their chosen leader, ready for service, but knowing not just where or just what it was to be.

Davis was a gunsmith, and in his little shop, under the apple-trees near the well-sweep, he had that winter examined many of their flint-locks and put them in good order. He himself carried a musket as well as a sword that morning as they went forth, keeping step to the tune of the "White Cockade." They followed the lane by the parsonage west of the present village, and came out by the old meeting-house; thence they turned down over Nashoba brook, and along the old Strawberry Hill road into Concord near Colonel Barrett's.

The following Sunday another and a very different scene was witnessed at the Davis homestead. Perhaps Acton, in all its history, has not been so profoundly moved as on this occasion, when the bodies of Davis, Hosmer, and Hayward were brought hither for the funeral solemnities. The whole town was in mourning; and the agonizing appeal to heaven uttered by the Rev. John Swift, then in the last year of his long ministry, found a tender response in every heart.

It is fitting that this spot should be marked by an enduring memorial in honor of the first American officer who fell in the Revolutionary War.

The stone is rounded at the corners, and inscribed as follows: —

DAVIS HOME.

THIS FARM WAS THE HOME
OF CAPT. ISAAC DAVIS
WHO WAS KILLED IN BATTLE
BY THE BRITISH AT
THE OLD NORTH BRIDGE
IN CONCORD APRIL 19TH
1775

and on the other face: —

ERECTED 1895
BY
CHARLES WHEELER

Mr. Wheeler is the present owner of the estate. The exercises here consisted of an address by Mr. Clark, of West Acton, and prayer by Mr. Porter.

An excellent dinner was then served by the ladies in the Town Hall, after which addresses were given in the adjoining tent, which was filled with listeners. Mr. Copping, the pastor of Acton Centre, officiated as chaplain. The chairman, Mr. Conant, welcomed the guests, and introduced as speakers Governor Greenhalge, ex-Governor Boutwell, Colonel Olin, Secretary of State, Colonel Watson of the Sixth Regiment, Captain Adams, Congressman Fitzgerald, and others. Mr. Porter responded for Lexington.

Every one was glad to welcome Mr. Boutwell, of Groton, as he was the Governor of the Commonwealth, and a most efficient helper, when the Battle Monument on the village green was dedicated in 1851. His presence on that occasion is gratefully remembered by the town.

Two other venerable guests received special honor. These were the surviving sons of men who fought at Concord Bridge, — Mr. Luke Smith, son of Solomon Smith, and Mr. James Miller Edwards, son of Ebenezer Edwards. So far as is known, there is only one other man living who can claim this distinction, and he is a brother of Mr. Edwards, — all three, therefore, sons of Acton.

It is proposed to erect a memorial stone next April at the home of James Hayward in West Acton. Lexington has already placed a tablet at the spot where he fell within her borders, while in pursuit of the British on their retreat early in the afternoon.